



## HLPF side event on

### **“COVID-19 vaccines: scientific advances, access models and vaccination acceptance”**

*Virtual side event to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2020*

Organized by the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the World Health Organization, City University of New York Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy, USCIB Foundation, Business Partners for Sustainable Development, Wilton Park, and Gavi the Vaccine Alliance.

08:00—09:00am EDT (New York time) on 10 July 2020

#### **Context**

Public trust in science is essential for science-based policies to succeed: in the case of COVID-19, all individuals must trust the scientific guidance. This becomes easier if there is a common understanding that scientific insights—based on objective evidence—can really work in practical settings, independent of normative values or ideologies. Public trust as well as scientific due diligence will be especially important for wide acceptance of future coronavirus vaccine programs, especially in view of the current enormous time pressure on scientists to complete clinical trials and safety assessments for more than forty vaccine prototypes that are currently under development. Last year, researchers on vaccine hesitancy reported significant problems of public trust in governments in general and in health authorities in particular. When asked whether vaccines are safe, a sizable minority of between 0 and 33% disagreed depending on the country. There is no clear relationship between vaccine acceptance and development level of a country, indicating that it is rather an issue of trusted information than of education or information access.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents specific challenges as well: relatively little may be known to start with, and as new knowledge becomes available, scientific guidance may change. Being able to honestly explain the uncertainties and evolving understanding is also essential to maintaining credibility. Yet another challenge is countering the “infodemic”: incorrect and potentially damaging information that is disseminated widely through various media platforms and social networks. It can be difficult to distinguish between true and false: researchers have reported that about 60% of misinformation about COVID-19 actually has some vestige of truth to it but is “spun” to make it misleading.

Science-policy efforts will continue to be urgent during recovery in both the immediate and medium term, including in dealing with attitudes against the acceptance of vaccines in many countries. Effective science-based engagement with society can go beyond communicating knowledge and guidance into active collaboration through “citizen science”, where non-scientists also participate in scientific advance and discovery.

Wilton Park has convened a series of dialogues on vaccine literacy for COVID-19 with London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and CUNY where a proposal for a coalition- ‘CONVINCE’ (COVID-19 New Vaccine Information, Communication and Education) has emerged. CONVINCE shares a vision of a world where COVID-19 vaccines- once developed- have impact through protecting lives and livelihoods from the

devastating impact of COVID-19. This can be achieved through taking a whole of society approach to vaccine literacy. CONVINCe calls on multisectoral stakeholders to contribute and support commitments to: the development, testing, evaluation, equitable distribution and implementation of a Coronavirus vaccine/s, supported by an array of effective and innovative fact-based communication programs which engage all audiences and support communities, policymakers, business leaders and other key leaders in communicating the importance of vaccination.

The need for a vaccine is global, but past experience shows that fair and equitable access is not a given. One of the most important functions of the science–policy–society interface at the global level is ensuring universal access to such global public goods. Similar considerations apply also to medicines that may become available to treat the disease. While rapid and ready access to research results and data is fuelling collaborations in a decentralized way, more coordinated multi-stakeholder and multilateral efforts are also needed to accelerate progress towards practical solutions and, when these become available, ensure universal access to them. A prominent example of this is the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), launched in 2017 as a partnership between public, private, philanthropic and civil society organizations to accelerate the development of epidemic vaccines. Its ongoing work has cut the expected development time for a COVID-19 vaccine, and its grants have provided quick funding for some promising early candidates. Important lessons can also be learnt for funding from international cooperation initiatives such as GAVI.

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) to support the achievement of the SDGs. The General Assembly resolutions that established and launched the TFM also mandated it to provide a venue for the establishment of stakeholder networks and partnerships, “in order to help facilitate development, transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for the sustainable development goals” (see para 70 of the 2030 Agenda). While very important gaps remain, there are an increasing number of promising new initiatives, models and arrangements that do facilitate access to technology across stakeholders and international borders.

### **Objective**

The objective of the event is feature scientific/research advances in COVID-19 vaccines and to discuss access models and vaccine acceptance.

### **Guiding questions**

1. What is the status of scientific research advances in COVID-19 vaccines? What are the implications for policy?
2. What are the most promising models for universal access? What are the most needed high priority actions in this regard?
3. How can public trust in science be earned, vaccine literacy be built, and misleading vaccine information and vaccine hesitancy be addressed?

### **Participants and structure**

The meeting will be attended by experts and representatives from academia, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, governments, and the UN system. The event will be a moderated panel discussion followed by open discussion. The duration will be 60 minutes.

## DRAFT Programme

8:00 – 8:02 (2 min.)	<b>Welcome and introduction by TFM 10-Member Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Vaughan Turekian, Co-chair of TFM 10-Member Group; and Executive Director of Policy and Global Affairs, The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, USA</li> </ul>
8:02 – 8:07 (5 min.)	<b>Opening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. Liu Zhenmin, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs</li> <li>Dr. Mariângela Batista Galvão Simão, Assistant Director-General, Access to Medicines and Health Products, World Health Organization</li> </ul>
8:07 – 8:17 (10 min.)	<b>Moderator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr. R.A Roehrl, Senior Economic Affairs Officer, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs</li> </ul> <b>Scientific advances in COVID-19 vaccines</b> <i>Guiding questions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the status of scientific research advances in COVID-19 vaccines?</li> <li>What are the implications for policy?</li> </ul> <i>Speakers (5 min. each):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Melanie Saville, Director of Vaccine Research &amp; Development, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)</li> <li>Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, World Health Organization (WHO)</li> </ul>
8:17 – 8:24 (7 min.)	<b>Access to vaccines, including manufacturing and deployment</b> <i>Guiding questions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the most promising models for universal access?</li> <li>What are the most needed high priority actions in this regard?</li> </ul> <i>Speaker (7 min.):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms Aurélia Nguyen, Managing Director, Vaccines and Sustainability Department, GAVI</li> </ul>
8:24 – 8:39 (15 min.)	<b>Public trust in science, vaccination acceptance, and vaccine literacy</b> <i>Guiding questions:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can public trust in science be earned, vaccine literacy be built, and misleading vaccine information and vaccine hesitancy be addressed?</li> <li>Call to action: CONVINCE (Covid-19 New Vaccine Information, Communication and Education)</li> </ul> <i>Speakers (15 min. total, joint presentation):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Scott Ratzan, Distinguished Lecturer, City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy; and Executive Director for Business Partners for Sustainable Development</li> <li>Prof. Heidi Larson, Professor of Anthropology, Risk and Decision Science and Director, The Vaccine Confidence Project, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine</li> <li>Ms. Nancy Lee, Programme Director, Global Health, Wilton Park, UK</li> </ul>
8:39 – 8:59 (20 min.)	<b>Statements and Q&amp;A</b> <i>TFM 10-Member Group of high-level representatives</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr. Paulo Gadelha, TFM 10-Member Group, and former President, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), Brazil</li> <li>Dr. Michiharu Nakamura, TFM 10-Member Group, and Counselor to the President, Japan Science and Technology Agency</li> <li>Dr. Jose-Ramon Lopez-Portillo, TFM 10-Member Group, Mexico</li> </ul> <i>Member States (tbc, reflecting interest expressed in the registration form) (1-2 min. each)</i>

	<p><i>Other stakeholders (tbc, reflecting interest expressed in the registration form) (1-2 min. each)</i></p> <p><i>Selected questions submitted online</i></p> <p><i>Responses by speakers</i></p>
<p>8:59 – 9:00 (1 min.)</p>	<p><b>Closing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Shantanu Mukherjee, Chief, Integrated Policy Analysis Branch, DSDG, Department of Economic and Social Affairs</li> </ul>